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ABSTRACT

The social studies labs described in this profile are non-classrooms where kids come during study halls or after school. There are no teacher assignments and no required content. Faculty people serve the labs as participants and advisors. Students develop lab carts, work in the Living History Center, review curriculum materials in the Materials Analysis Center, engage in research and develop materials on the environment, and assist in the lab publication program. The lab cart program is most successful. A lab cart looks like a bookcase on wheels, and contains books, periodicals, filmstrips, descriptions of human and community resources, slides, and a slide-tape presentation that serves as an overview of the topic. The Living History Center, has student-developed audiovisual units focusing on aspects of Enfield's history. In the Curriculum Materials Analysis Center, new and revised materials are reviewed by student-teacher teams and rated for interest, accuracy, objectivity, relevance and value. Dig-Discuss-Do is an action-oriented program concerned with improving local and national environmental quality. Equipment and space for the labs are located in one room of the social studies department at each high school. All decisions are made jointly by students and faculty as a team. Over 200 students are involved in the labs on a voluntary basis--Enfield personnel think of this as an indicator of success. (A short listing of other resources for information on this program conclude the profile.) (JLB)

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SOCIAL STUDIES LABS:

Enfield's Exciting Alternative

"When we opened the doors of our little laboratory at Enfield High, we decided that enough people were talking about what couldn't be done, and that we'd start doing what could be done. The purpose of the labs is to show kids how to learn for themselves by getting involved—really involved—in their own education. Essentially, education is the individual's search for meaning in his life. But you can't find meaning sitting in a chair; you can't get it poured into you; you have to get up and find it for yourself."

—Bruce Phillips, *former student*
Enfield High School

Enfield, Connecticut high school students have the opportunity to participate in an exciting project known as the Social Studies Laboratory. The Labs are non-classrooms where kids come during study halls or after school. The whole scene is extra curricular—no teacher assignments and no required content. Faculty people serve the Labs as participants and advisors, not as teachers. Students can develop lab carts, work in the Living History Center, review curriculum materials in the Materials Analysis Center, engage in research and develop materials on the environment, and assist in the Lab publication program.

LAB CARTS

The lab cart program is most successful. The Enfield Labs have developed carts on environment, mental health, violence, conservation, megalopolis, propaganda, and the American Negro. Carts also contain programs on Canada, Southeast Asia, China, Israel, and Africa.

A lab cart looks like a bookcase on wheels and is truly a powerful learning vehicle. Carts are produced in the school woodshop for $15.00. Each cart has a homosite backing that doubles as a bulletin board, and the casters allow easy movement from room to room and even from school to school. Carts contain books, reference works, periodicals, filmstrips, tapes, and slides. Topic "experts," television programs, and community resources are listed. The carts are kept up-to-date with reprints from newspapers and continuously revised files on related agencies and institutions. A student design team creates the design for their cart, including a slide-tape presentation serving as an overview of the cart topic. This presentation is the central component; a slide projector and tape recorder can be mounted on top of the cart. Thus, a great variety of resources and equipment make the lab carts a source of materials and methods for stimulating learning experiences.

These student-initiated carts are extremely popular. Teachers throughout the Enfield district sign up for them in advance. Many school projects have resulted from the lab cart units; for example, the environmental cart initiated a slide-film documentary called L.I.F.E., which exposed details about pollution and waste disposal practices in the community. Photographed and written by Enfield students, the L.I.F.E. project generated interest in and had widespread impact on the local community's environment.

LIVING HISTORY CENTER

The Living History Center is another Lab program. The center's audio-visual units are fast becoming a community archive of Enfield's history. "Our Vanishing Heritage" was the first unit to be developed. This thought-provoking slide-tape presentation has made the school and community conscious of their history, natural endowments, and problems. The student developers demonstrated their creativity as historians as well as their skill in audio-visual techniques.

Slide-tape units of the Living History Center are used by the school and by civic groups in Enfield. "Our Vanishing Heritage" traveled to Mexico to the International Conference on Visual Literacy. "Men in Blue" tells the story of the Enfield police. New students in the high schools see "Enfield High School Orientation." "The I's Have It" documents the story of the social studies Labs. Students are especially proud of "Fermi High: A School is Born," which tells the story of their new high school from groundbreaking to dedication.

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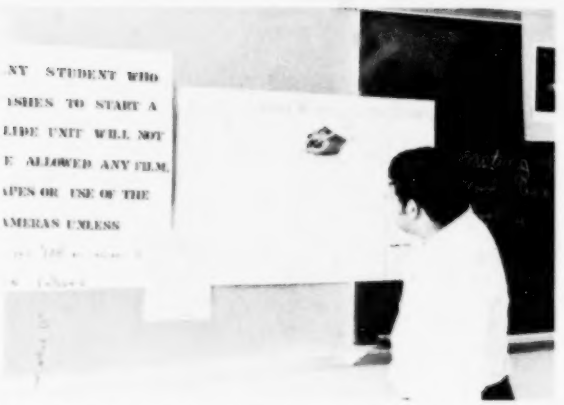
Assembling a lab cart for classroom use.

Making a slide from a magazine illustration



The students keep track of materials and deadlines for lab projects.

Sorting slides for slide-tape presentations.

CURRICULUM MATERIALS ANALYSIS CENTER

New and revised curriculum materials are reviewed by student-teacher teams. This service, used by both teachers and students, is a significant part of all Lab projects. The student director of the Materials Analysis Center seeks innovative materials in all fields of learning—particularly those suitable for short-term courses, inquiry learning, and independent study. Creative audio-visual programs are of special interest.

Materials are listed on a materials analysis form—a short, concise way of evaluating the content, format, cost, size, and particular use of the materials. All types of materials are analyzed: books, filmstrips, films, photographs, pamphlets, and newspapers. The materials are rated on a percentage scale for interest, accuracy, clarity, objectivity, relevance, and value. Students and teachers add comments and recommendations concerning the materials. Curriculum materials, evaluative information, and publishers' catalogs make the Materials Analysis Center a valuable resource center for the Labs as well as for the Enfield schools.

DIG-DISCUSS-DO

Dig-Discuss-Do is an active program concerned with improving local as well as national environmental quality. The student-teacher teams in this program assess aspects of the national and local environmental quality, such as water, wildlife, population, living space, and service facilities. They *dig* for the facts and *discuss* their findings with fellow classmates. A slide-tape presentation is then prepared and shared with the community to show what the local environmental quality really is. The team seeks to involve the community in a program to *do* things to solve environmental problems they have uncovered. Together, students and community leaders explore ways to inform and involve citizens in sustained action programs to enforce existing laws and work for enactment of new laws. Local mass media resources are used to influence community opinion and long-range community planning is encouraged.

Students in the Dig-Discuss-Do program learn not only about their environment, but also about effective community relations. The National Wildlife Federation published a practical guide describing the program: "To Save the Earth—A Tool Kit To Our Environmental Quality Index."

PLANNING THE PROGRAM

The original idea for the Labs came in 1968 from a student, Bruce Phillips. One evening at a rehearsal of "Oklahoma," he and a group of kids were talking about school and how they were "turned off" by their conventional classes and "turned on" by their drama activities. In the drama group, students directed their own production with teachers as advisors. They threw themselves into their parts, worked together, and became involved in the theater process. They wondered, "Why can't all learning be like this?"

Bruce took this idea to Franklin Gross, then Social Studies Department Chairman and Drama Club Advisor at Enfield High School. Together, they formed the first student-teacher team. The team grew as other students became interested. They talked, argued, and explored classroom learning situations in which students could be directors, as they were in their drama productions. Out of their discussions grew the idea for the Social Studies Laboratory.

The original program was started with only the desire to do something exciting and worthwhile. As its proponents pushed the qualities of the program, support came from the many sources that now keep the Labs going. Sensing the significance of the communication techniques used by the Enfield Labs, Eastman Kodak opened the door by providing money for some of the basic cameras and projectors. The school administration is most supportive of the Lab and has changed budget priorities to allow for purchase of film materials. Class time and materials are used to build the Lab Carts in woodshop. The school librarian cooperates in the implementation of the Materials Analysis Center—a facility made possible by a mini-grant from the Connecticut State Department of Education.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The students who founded the first Social Studies Lab in 1968 wrote a "declaration of principles" which still serves as a set of guidelines for the program. It states:

1) Learning cannot be enforced. It must be exciting or challenging or personally relevant enough to be wanted.

2) Most kids think they know what and how they want to learn. But only with the freedom and challenge to do something about it can they know and reveal that knowing.

3) True learning requires no course credits, no grades, no invidious rewards or even escape from established classroom curricula—no classroom assignments and no teacher controls—only advice and counsel, and only from teachers who are involved.

4) Every student in the Lab must be free to select any subject in the world to work on. But proof of his interest, his ability to explore the subject, and his method of research must be demonstrable to a Lab student committee.

5) We live in a multi-media visual age. Each project or related segment of a complex subject must be adequately prepared for audio-visual presentation.

6) In order to assure quality of work and thus validate the whole idea, a tough, disciplined, and soundly-structured student organization is necessary.

PLANNING THE PROJECTS

Equipment and space for the Labs are located in one room of the social studies department at each high school. Students come in during study hour or after school to work on projects. Occasionally, teachers suggest Lab projects as part of a student's regular class work, but most projects are student initiated.

Teachers participate as co-sponsors or advisors. When a student wishes to produce a Lab unit, he sets up a team consisting of a teacher and two or three other students. After choosing a subject to develop, they put their ideas in writing, including the topic, questions to answer, and beginning and completion dates for the project.

The idea is submitted to a student examining board that decides whether the unit will be developed. If a unit is approved, the team develops a plan of action including basic research on the topic and an outline of pictures and dialogue. Assignments are made and due dates established. Deadlines allow ample time for retaking pictures, remaking tapes, and rethinking the project. Team members rewrite, edit, revise, and preview the unit before it is released for public showing.

Special team effort is required for development of a Living History unit. A Living History Steering Committee evaluates proposed units for picture-taking possibilities and the availability of suitable background information. The students and teachers must be able to demonstrate their ability to handle the projectors and recorders before pictures are taken or the narration taped. The team receives instructions on the beauty of uncluttered pictures and short, concise dialogue.

Rewriting the script, rehearsing the narrative, and retaking the slides is time consuming, but this is the way effective units are produced.

THE TEAMS

Franklin Gross was the original faculty advisor of the Social Studies Laboratory at Enfield High School; he is currently on sabbatical leave from his role as Social Studies Department Chairman at Enrico Fermi High School. Dennis Corso and Ed Boland serve as faculty advisors for the Labs this year. But the heart and soul of the Labs—what makes them work—is the student organization. Students serve in all the staff positions: Board of Directors, Executive Director, Assistant Director, Project Director, and Creative Projects Director. A Student Examining Board, Technical Services Group, Materials Analysis Director, and Director of Publications keep the center operating smoothly.

All decisions are made jointly by students and faculty as a team. Every participant believes this team effort is a critical factor in the success of the Labs.

Enfield personnel point to the fact that over 200 students are involved in the Labs on a voluntary basis as an indicator of success. Although formal evaluation of student cognitive and affective growth is not part of the Lab program, Dennis Corso has done some informal research on the effect of the program on students. He has found that students who are disenchanted with school show better attendance and interest after becoming involved in the Labs. Corso also notes that Enfield students continually submit and work on projects and this indicates their interest in self-direction.

THE FUTURE

The teachers and students of the Enfield Social Studies Labs wish they knew for sure where their vision of student-directed learning is leading them. They hope to build even better ways for students to create their own learning environment, and to open more and more windows to a wider world for students. The Lab personnel know they must continue to break down the walls of habits—habits that for years have kept educators grinding out curriculum offerings for students they haven't even met.

The staff feels that although true involvement is never easy to achieve, they have made a beginning. They are proud they didn't wait until they could afford change, but, "plunged ahead, made waves, and support came rolling in. What is needed more than special funding are student and teacher participants who are willing to take the risk and do the hard work."

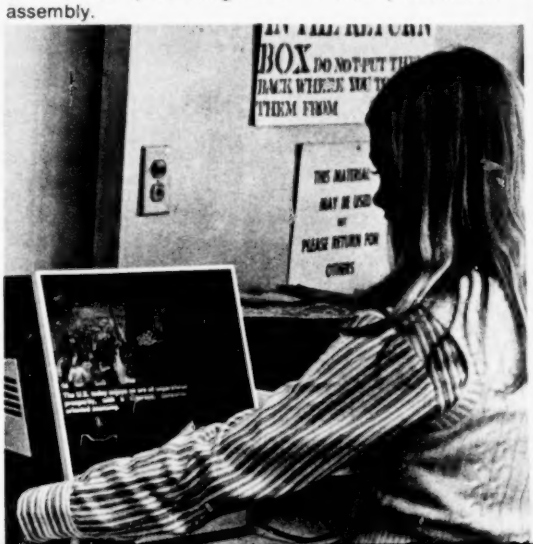
Franklin Gross has a favorite quote, which expressed an educational goal of Comenius in 1638: "I have been seeking a way for teachers to teach less and students to learn more..." The Enfield Social Studies Labs have taken a giant leap toward that goal.

Monitoring a tape in the quiet room at the lab.

Assembling a final slide-tape presentation.

The end of a busy day in the lab.

Visual slide previewing aids in final presentation assembly.



For more information

WRITE:

Social Studies Lab
Enfield High School
Enfield, Connecticut 06082

For: Student written materials on Lab Cart programs, Living History Center, and other current projects.

National Wildlife Federation
1412 Sixteenth Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

For: **To Save the Earth—A Tool Kit To Our Environmental Quality Index.** A sixteen page booklet which presents step-by-step procedures for Enfield's "Dig-Discuss-Do" program and lists source materials.
$.10 each

Eastman Kodak
Department 454
Rochester, New York 14650

For: **Enfield: The Vision That Is Changing a World,** Serial Number T-90-0-2, one of Eastman Kodak's **Visuals Are a Language** Series.
$.50 each

National Broadcasting Company
Room 906W
Rockefeller Plaza
New York City, New York 10020

For: **Decision '72: Reaching for Reality.** A series of reprints of scholastic articles sponsored by N.B.C. describing the Enfield participation in N.B.C.'s coverage of the New Hampshire primaries.
Free

READ:

Hopkins, Lee Bennett and Misha Arenstein. **Partners In Learning: A Child-Centered Approach to Teaching the Social Studies.** New York: Citation Press, 1971. $2.95

Joyce, Bruce R. **New Strategies For Social Education.** Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1971. $9.95

Minor, Ed and Harvey R. Fryre. **Techniques For Producing Visual Instructional Media.** New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970. $7.95

Wiseman, T. Jan and Molly J. Wiseman. **Creative Communications: Teaching Mass Media.** Minneapolis, Minn: National Scholastic Press Association, 1971 $3.95

TELLING THE STORY

An important spin-off of the program is its publications. Accomplishments and projects are documented in a student-edited journal, *Contact*, and a yearbook, *Future*. These publications contain noteworthy student compositions on social studies topics as well as reports on lab cart projects, Living History programs, and new materials in the Materials Analysis Center. News about school happenings, letters to the editor, and notices about new courses make these issues regular school publications, with a unique difference—they are geared especially to social studies.

The students also disseminate information about their program outside of the Enfield schools. A wall map of the United States in the Social Studies Lab has 500 pins each representing inquiries or visitors interested in the Lab. The students say they need other maps to represent foreign countries. Hundreds of letters are received each year requesting information about the Labs. The students answer them all.

Outside support for the Labs is growing. In the spring of 1972, Lab students were trained by the National Broadcasting Company as interviewers in the New Hampshire primaries. NBC documented this project in a series of brochures, "Decision '72: Reaching for Reality."

Film distributors such as Warner Brothers, United Artists, Walter Reade, Universal, and Films Inc., hearing the the unique interest in audio-visual curricula, have made possible "Film at Fermi." Started as an experimental program related to Lab work, introductory and advanced courses are now offered in independent film-making at Enrico Fermi High School.

Students were asked to write an article about the program for SPAN, the international publication of the United States Office of Information, and the U. S. Steel Workers of America requested student assistance in setting up a school-community program in Kokomo, Indiana.

ERIC Documents

ED 040 465 - Student Involvement: A Working Paper - MF $.65, HC $3.29

ED 057 018 - Beginning Notes Toward Conceptualization of Learner-Controlled Instruction - MF $.65, HC $3.29

ED 057 567 - Student-Directed Curriculum: An Alternative Educational Approach - MF $.65, HC $3.29

ED 058 127 - Planning For An Ecology-Action Unit/Course - MF $.65, HC $3.29

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Reproduction Service
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Bethesda, Maryland 20014

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